

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

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FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5983

USDEL JEC PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 14744

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: PINT, ECON, VS, CB

SUBJ: TAY NINH PROVINCE-SENATE ELECTIONS, TRADE WITH THE

PRG AND CAMBODIA

FOLLOWING CABLE SENT ACTION SAIGON INFO AC CANTHO DANANG NHA TRANG
FROM BIEN HOA AUGUST 14, BEING RPT FOR YOUR INFO. QUOTE:

C O N F I D E N T I A L BIEN HOA 0398E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, ECON, BDIS, VS, CB

SUBJECT: TAY NINH PROVINCE -- SENATE ELECTIONS, TRADE WITH
THE PRG, AND CAMBODIA

SUMMARY: SLATES 3 AND 4 ARE BEGINNING TO CAMPAIGN IN TAY NINH
PROVINCE AS THOUGH THEY HAVE A CHANCE TO WIN. POSTERS ABOUND,
AND THEY ARE TRYING TO REGISTER WITH PROVINCE OFFICIALS. THE
CAO DAI CHURCH SEEMS TO BE TAKING A HANDS OFF ATTITUDE IN THE
ELECTION, RELYING ON ITS LONG-STANDING NEUTRAL STANCE. TRADE
WITH THE ENEMY, A HITHERTO THORNY PROBLEM FOR THE GVN TO CONTROL,
SEEMS TO BE STOPPED, BUT THERE ARE STRONG INDICATIONS THAT
IT MAY BE SHORT-LIVED. THE TAY NINH PROVINCE CHIEF, KNOWN
FOR HIS PESSIMISM, IS OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THE CAMBODIAN OUTCOME
BECAUSE HE BELIEVES THAT GVN AND THAI TROOPS, WITH U.S. SUPPORT,
WILL PREVENT CAMBOFS
FROM FALLING TO THE KHMER ROUGE. END SUMMARY.

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THE REPORTING OFFICER VISITED TAY NINH PROVINCE ON AUGUST 9-10.

1. THE SENATE ELECTION: NOTABLE ABSENT IN THE BEGINNING WEEKS OF THE CAMPAIGN, SLATES 3 AND 4 ARE NOW COMING ON STRONG. SLATE 3 HAS ALREADY PLASTERED THE ENTIRE PROVINCE WITH POSTERS. ITS POSTERS ALREADY OUTNUMBER THE COMBINED POSTERS OF SLATES 1 AND 2 BY ABOUT THREE OR FOUR TO ONE. SLATE 4 HAS JUST STARTED ITS CAMPAIGN BUT, IN THE AREAS WHERE IT HAS HAD A CHANCE TO PUT UP POSTERS, IT IS KEEPING UP WITH SLATE 3. BOTH SLATES 3 AND 4 ARE CURRENTLY ATTEMPTING TO REGISTER THEIR PROVINCE REPRESENTATIVES WITH THE PROVINCE OFFICIALS.

THE ACTING CAO DAI POPE INFORMED THE REPORTING OFFICER THAT SLATES 1 AND 2 ALREADY HAD AUDIENCES WITH HIM DURING WHICH THEY BOTH REQUESTED OFFICIAL SUPPORT OF THE CAO DAI CHRUCH. HE INFORMED THEM THAT THE "OFFICIAL" CHURCH POLICY WOULD BE NEUTRALITY DURING THE ELECTION.

THE CIVILIAN MOTIVATION CHIEF PREDICTED THAT 85-90 PERCENT OF THE VOTERS WOULD VOTE IN TAY NINH ON ELECTION DAY. OFFICIALLY, HE NOTED, HE AND ALL OTHER GVN OFFICIALS ARE NEUTRAL IN THE ELECTION, BUT PERSONALLY HE BELIEVES THE PEOPLE WILL SUPPORT SLATES 1 AND 2.

OTHER LOCAL SOURCES, HOWEVER, INDICATE THAT DESPITE BELATED CAMPAIGNS BY SLATES 3 AND 4, SLATES 1 AND 2 HAVE THE SUPPORT OF GVN OFFICIALS AND WILL UNDOUBTEDLY WIN. RD CADRE AND VILLAGE AND HAMLET OFFICIALS ARE REPORTEDLY GOING DOOR-TO-DOOR TO ELICIT SUPPORT FOR GOVERNMENT-SUPPORTED CANDIDATES.

2. TRADE WITH PRG: THE EFFORT TO CUT OFF TRADE WITH THE PRG HAS APPARENTLY BEEN VERY SUCCESSFUL.

GOVERNMENT

OFFICIAL SERIOUSLY ESTIMATE THAT BETWEEN 70 PERCENT AND 95 PERCENT OF THE TRADE HAS BEEN STOPPED. ACCORDING TO SEVERAL OFFICIALS, BRIBERY OF CHECKPOINT OFFICIALS IS NOT CURRENTLY BEING USED SUCCESSFULLY BY TRADERS TO EVADE THE GOVERNMENT BAN. THE LEAKS IN THE DIKE OF TRADE PREVENTION APPEAR TO BE THREE IN NUMBER. THE FIRST LEAK IS THE JUNGLE THROUGH WHICH THE MORE HARDY TRADERS STILL SLIP. THE SECOND LEAK IS THE VAN CO DONG RIVER AND THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE RIVER NAVY -- THE LATTER STILL A VC SUPPLY POINT. THE THIRD LEAK APPEARS TO BE THE BEGINNING OF A CRACK RATHER THAN A MERE LEAK. A CHECK OF THE TAY NINH PROVINCE DAILY

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POLICE LOGS REVEALS THAT 32 LAMBRETTA DRIVERS HAVE NOW BEEN GIVEN PERMISSION BY THE PROVINCE GOVERNMENT TO RESUPPLY THE RF OUTPOST AT PHUOC TAN. IN THE PAST THIS OUTPOST HAS BEEN SUPPLIED BY CHOPPER BECAUSE IT TAKES TWO COMPANIES OF RF TO OPEN THE ROAD FROM PHUOC NINH DISTRICT HEADQUARTERS TO THE OUTPOST. NOW THAT THESE SUPPLIERS WILL BE MOVING BY LAND THROUGH A VC-CONTROLLED AREA, THERE WILL NATURALLY BE OPPORTUNITIES TO SUPPLY THE VC.

SINCE THERE IS CURRENTLY A SHORTAGE OF RICE IN CAMBODIA AND THE TRADE WITH THE VC PRESUMABLY HAS BEEN CUT OFF IN TAY NINH, VARIOUS PROVINCE OFFICIALS SUGGEST THAT THE VC IS NOW BUYING FOOD IN THE TRANG BANG AREA.

3. CAMBODIA: TAY NINH PROVINCE CHIEF COL. THIEN IS CONCERNED ABOUT THE POSSIBLE FALL OF PHNOM PENH. HE FEELS THE U.S. WILL BE TO BLAME IF THE BOMBING IS STOPPED, BUT HE DOES NOT REALLY BELIEVE THAT THE USG WILL STOP THE BOMBING. BEFORE PHNOM PENH FALLS HE BELIEVES THAT SOUTH VIETNAMESE AND THAI TROOPS (WITH U.S. SUPPORT) WILL COME TO THE AID OF THE CAMBODIAN GOVERNMENT. WALKINSHWA
UNQUOTE
MARTIN

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